



CHARITY FRAUD AWARENESS

For comments or questions, contact the West Virginia Intelligence / Fusion Center by phone at 304.558.4831 or e-mail at wvfusion@wv.gov.

The purpose of this snapshot is to highlight the potential impact of charity fraud in the United States. Charity fraud is the act of using deception to obtain money from people who believe they are making donations to charities. At this time, the West Virginia Intelligence/Fusion Center has no specific information indicating that there are charity fraud campaigns targeting the State of West Virginia or its citizens; however, individuals should exercise caution when making donations to alleged charitable organizations.



Overview

Charity fraud is the use of deception to obtain money from persons who believe they are making donations to reputable, legitimate organizations and mimic the actions of such.

- Fraudulent charities often use names that mimic legitimate charities.
- Representatives may make vague and sentimental claims, but give no specifics.
- Representatives may rush or pressure persons into making donations.

Fraudulent individuals or charities often use recent disasters to make it appear that the organization was created in response.

- Natural disasters
- Holidays
- Charitable giving campaigns

These attempts are often followed by a sense of urgency, persuading the victim that a donation must be made immediately.

Attack Vectors

Fraudsters will utilize multiple communicate avenues to extort money from individuals, including but not limited to:

- Social media
- Unsolicited phone calls
- In person
- Misspelled web addresses to mimic legitimate websites

Previous Events

Fraudulent organizations are frequently created with trustworthy sounding names in attempts to defraud donors.

These organizations have previously been accused by the Federal Trade Commission of defrauding consumers out of money and doing little or nothing to assist beneficiaries.

Identifying Legitimate Charities

Third party resources exist for identifying charities. Such entities provide reviews, funding reports, identify employee compensation, and provide resources for reporting fraudulent actions.

- [Charity Watch](#)
- [Charity Navigator](#)
- [Combined Federal Campaign](#)
- [WV Attorney General—Consumer Protection Division](#)

Common signs of charity fraud include the method by which donations are accepted. Signs of payment methods that suggest charity fraud include:

- Payment by gift card.
- Payment by wire transfer.

